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CHALLENGE

FIGHT FOR COMMUNISM · LUCHE POR EL COMUNISMO · PLP

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TENANTS EXPOSE RACIST PROFITEERS

In a communist society, housing is a working-class necessity that would be under the leadership and power of workers. But under capitalism that's not true and not possible.

SAN FRANCISCO, CA, FEBRUARY 14—This past Valentine's Day, a multiracial group of 60 tenants, antiracists, and members of Progressive Labor Party (PLP) disrupted the capitalists' love affair with their latest profit schemes by invading a dinner at the Keystone Social House. The Keystone is a fancy restaurant in a building owned by Mosser Capital, a racist, profiteering real estate developer.

The protesters occupied the restaurant for about 20 minutes, chanting, "Housing is a human right!" and "Have a Heart – Stop the Rent Increases!" It is true that in a communist society, housing is a working-class necessity that would be under the leadership and power of workers. But under capitalism that's not true and not possible. Capitalism is a cutthroat, competitive system where profits rule. Capitalism has no heart.

But workers have a heart and a bold fighting spirit. They then occupied the Mosser hotel lobby to demand the owner agree to a meeting with the tenants. The hotel staff agreed to fax the demand letter. PLP members distributed 150 leaflets, several copies of CHALLENGE, and made some contacts. As the fight against Mosser Capital continues, we need to build a longterm, revolutionary movement for communism, a society with housing for all.

Racist land speculator

Mosser was founded in San Francisco in 1955 investing in "rent stabilized multi-unit buildings in high-demand emerging markets that have a high potential for rent growth," but has quickly expanded to Oakland and Los Angeles since establishing Mosser Capital in 2012. Neveo Mosser, who is chair of the California Apartment Association got himself appointed to the San Francisco Rent Stabilization Board to protect his investments. That's how capitalism works. The capitalist, in this case real estate tycoon Mosser, either controls the politicians or gets himself a position of political power, or both. He can then make the laws and regulations so that they benefit his business.

In the last three years, Mosser Capital has purchased over 20 multi-unit buildings in Oakland with over 600 units. All are rent-controlled. But, of course, Mosser is taking advantage of a "loophole" in the law by making "major improvements" to justify exemptions from rent control. One tenant said Mosser paved over a backyard garden and demanded tenants pay for it even though tenants liked the garden. Mosser says they can raise the rent annually by 10 percent until the "improvements" are paid off.

Real estate giants like Mosser, Wedgewood, and Blackstone spent $100 million to defeat statewide rent control Prop 10 in 2018. One feature of Prop 10 was "vacancy control" which would have extended rent control to units once they were vacated by tenants. Besides controlling politicians directly with "donations" and payoffs, capitalists also spend millions to control what laws are passed. Now they can harass tenants to move with their phony "major improvements" scam in the hope they can hike rents even faster.

Capitalist reforms are inadequate

The Alliance of Californians for Community Empowerment (ACCE) is organizing working-class tenants to take "direct actions" like this against Mosser, the Moms4Housing occupation of a vacant home in West Oakland (see CHALLENGE, 2/5/2020), and a four-month rent strike in a 14-unit building in East Oakland. Several of the Moms and the striking tenants came to the Mosser demonstration.

While PLP is encouraged by the increasing fightback by growing numbers of workers, we must focus on developing ties and communist consciousness among them. We have started two study groups where we discuss both the racist inequality in homelessness, and the difference between the capitalist commodity (exchange value) approach to housing and the communist (use value) approach of providing housing for needs of the working class.

Relying on electoral and legislative approaches to tenants' rights like Prop 10 ignores the obvious dictatorship that capitalists have controlling the government and the media. Further, relying on liberal charities like the community land trusts, while able to help a few lucky working class families, gives the illusion that capitalism can solve the problems of all workers.

Recently, Wedgewood Properties, which initially agreed to sell "Moms' House" to the land trust, now wants the new "appraised value" of $650K which is $150K more than the $500K Wedgewood paid for it last July. The capitalists fiddle while the Moms and their families struggle to be safe and secure in their homes. Fight for communism!✪

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OUR FIGHT

✰Progressive Labor Party (PLP) fights to destroy capitalism and the dictatorship of the capitalist class. We organize workers, soldiers and youth into a revolutionary movement for communism.

✰The dictatorship of the working class — communism—can provide a lasting solution to the disaster that is today's world for billions of people. This cannot be done through electoral politics, but requires a revolutionary movement and a mass Red Army led by PLP.

✰Worldwide capitalism, in its relentless drive for profit, inevitably leads to war, fascism, poverty, disease, starvation and environmental destruction. The capitalist class, through its state power — governments, armies, police, schools and culture — maintains a dictatorship over the world's workers. The capitalist dictatorship supports, and is supported by, the anti-working-class ideologies of racism, sexism, nationalism, individualism and religion.

✰While the bosses and their mouthpieces claim "communism is dead," capitalism is the real failure for billions worldwide. Capitalism returned to Russia and China because socialism retained many aspects of the profit system, like wages and privileges. Russia and China did not establish communism.

✰Communism means working collectively to build a worker-run society. We will abolish work for wages, money and profits. While capitalism needs unemployment, communism needs everyone to contribute and share in society's benefits and burdens.

✰Communism means abolishing racism and the concept of "race." Capitalism uses racism to super-exploit Black, Latin, Asian and indigenous workers, and to divide the entire working class.

✰Communism means abolishing the special oppression of women— sexism—and divisive gender roles created by the class society.

✰Communism means abolishing nations and nationalism. One international working class, one world, one Party.

✰Communism means that the minds of millions of workers must become free from religion's false promises, unscientific thinking and poisonous ideology. Communism will triumph when the masses of workers can use the science of dialectical materialism to understand, analyze and change the world to meet their needs and aspirations.

✰Communism means the Party leads every aspect of society. For this to work, millions of workers — eventually everyone — must become communist organizers. Join Us!

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WHO WRITES FOR CHALLENGE?

CHALLENGE is for the working class, produced by the working class. The fact that CHALLENGE/PLP articles are not signed grows from PLP's criticism of the cult of the individual in the former socialist Soviet Union and China. We do not want to encourage the possibility of building up a "following" around any particular individual.

While an article may be written by one person, the final version is based on collective discussion and criticism. Many times this collective discussion even precedes an individual's writing of an article.

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Editorial

Australia: bosses leverage climate crisis for fascism

The deadly and destructive nature of global capitalism has been on full display in Australia. Years of drought in the country's eastern states have sparked some of the worst wildfires in history. Since September 2019, at least 30 people have died and more than 14 million acres have burned, an area nearly the size of West Virginia (New York Times, 1/3). Over one billion animals have perished in the carnage (ABC News, 1/8).

The blame for this devastation lies squarely with the capitalist bosses. They like to deflect responsibility by telling workers that we need to make better lifestyle choices to reverse climate change. In reality, however, it is the rulers' profit system—and especially their dependence on fossil fuels—that is driving environmental collapse.

For the local ruling class, the Australian wildfires present an opportunity to push more fascist discipline on workers. Meanwhile, the U.S. and Chinese imperialists are leveraging the crisis to gain a competitive edge in a region with strategic importance for the next global military war.

The revolutionary communist Progressive Labor Party (PLP) calls on the international working class to reject the bosses' "solutions" to environmental crises that sentence millions of workers to our deaths each year. By building a mass Red Army of millions led by PLP, we can overthrow the rulers with communist revolution. By doing away with money and profits, we can create a collective society that struggles for working class safety and ecological sustainability.

Imperialist tide turns, Down Under

For decades, Australia has remained tightly bound to the U.S., the world's top imperialist power. Shortly after World War II, the U.S. bosses created military alliances with Australia to contain the Soviet Union (still a workers' state at the time) and the communists in China, who had just emerged victorious after years of war against various capitalist armies.

In recent years, Chinese capitalists have projected more power in the South China Sea and the greater Pacific region, home to vital marine shipping routes and billions of dollars in trade (Geopolitical Futures, 2/3). As a counter, the U.S. bosses are urgently working to strengthen ties with Australia. Since 2005, the two nations' militaries have staged a biannual training exercise with logistics sharing, amphibious landings, and air operations (Army Technology, 7/29/19). The northern coastal city of Darwin is home to 2,500 U.S. marines. In late 2018, U.S. Vice President Mike Pence announced a joint commitment with Australia to upgrade Lombrum naval base on Manus Island in nearby Papua New Guinea, or PNG (Reuters, 11/16/18). The move came amid talk of China extending its Belt and Road Initiative and developing ports in PNG. As the U.S. Naval Institute warned:

> *Manus's commanding position north of mainland Papua New Guinea would allow China to regulate sea lines of communication (SLOCs) heading toward the eastern Australian seaboard and New Zealand. The 2,100-square-kilometer island also flanks the approaches to maritime east Asia. Indeed, prominent naval thinker Milan Vego maintains that "bases flanking friendly or enemy shipping routes . . . provide great advantages in both offense and defense in wartime (usni.com, December 2018).*

Although the Australian ruling class still leans toward the U.S., the Chinese bosses have steadily expanded their presence on the island continent. China is the top importer of Australian commodities, and brings billions of dollars in annual tourism revenue (Wall Street Journal, 2/9). Notably, the Australian bosses signed on as a founding member of the Asian Infrastructure Investment Bank, a Chinese-run alternative to the U.S.-dominated World Bank and International Monetary Fund (ACRI, 4/25/19).

As China's growing economic influence in and around Australia leads to greater military ambitions, it could trigger a response from the U.S. and open inter-imperialist conflict in an unstable region.

Building fascism, one natural disaster at a time

The Australian ruling class had over 10 years to prepare for the latest environmental cataclysm. The Black Saturday bushfires of 2009 were some of the country's worst ever (The Guardian, 2/6/19). But instead of tightening environmental regulations and improving fire-fighting infrastructure, the bosses claimed that broader access to technology would protect workers and wildlife (The Conversation, 2/6/19). As usual, the bosses were wrong. As usual, workers are paying for their profit-driven neglect.

Australia is the world's largest exporter of both

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Racism, income inequality plague workers in Australia

The bosses in Australia like to brag about their status as one of the longest-living capitalist "democracies" in the world, and how the country has gone almost three decades without a recession (Market Watch, 2/9). Wage growth for workers has slowed to a trickle, while corporate profits and executive bonuses have soared. In one year alone, between 2016 and 2017, the number of billionaires in Australia grew by 20 percent. Workers are experiencing an "income recession" as rising living costs have combined with falling wages (actu.org).

Meanwhile, racist attacks on workers, ever present in this capitalist "democracy," have only intensified in recent years. Prime Minister Scott Morrison's government has carried out a racist policy of "resettling" asylum seekers to offshore island detention centers in Nauru and Papua New Guinea. Awaiting legal processing, these workers often languish for years and are easy targets for sexual violence and robbery (Foreign Policy, 7/24/19).

The indigenous workers in Australia, compromising about 3 percent of the population, continue to lag behind in child mortality, literacy, and employment. On average, indigenous men die eight years younger than non-indigenous men, and youth suicide rates are four times higher (BBC, 2/12).

Fight racist immigration policies

Healthcare workers protest at U.S. Customs and Border Protection headquarters

Washington, D.C., February 6—Progressive Labor Party members have joined a number of rallies and struggles against racist immigration policies, including a recent rally in Washington, D.C. Our goal: show medical professionals that only a strategy with the end goal of communism and revolution can alter the vicious capitalist attacks on workers who are divided from each other by capitalist-formed borders. Our class has no borders, and revolution will abolish them!

Racism and cages divide families

Racist immigration policies are dividing families at the Texas-Mexico border. The U.S. bosses' racist immigration policies create a devil's choice for families migrating to the U.S. from Central America. The Migrant Protection Protocols (MPP) force families who come together into unsafe conditions in Mexico where children entering without parents are forced into U.S. detention centers. Children are in cages and some have died while the Customs and Border Patrol (CBP) was supposed to be monitoring them and getting them treatment. Among many horrors, the CBP is not giving children flu vaccines. The CBP claimed that the children could get the vaccine after they reached their final destination since they would only be held a couple of days. But in fact, many are held longer and the crowded conditions predispose the spread of infection.

Medical workers organize

One organization in which we are involved in is Doctors4CampClosure (D4CC), which is protesting against inhumane and racist policies. This group has over 2,000 medical professionals and has demanded to meet with CBP medical staff about flu vaccinations and general medical care for children and families. In DMV (District of Maryland and Virginia) an active chapter led a protest at the Trump hotel in October and today a local contingent gathered to protest in D.C. at the CBP headquarters. In response to the mobilization, CBP Senior Medical Advisor David Tarantino said he would meet with the group after all. This remains to be seen.

Progressive Labor Party (PLP) members have participated with D4CC here and led the rally at the Philadelphia ICE office during the American Public Health Association's annual meeting in November. Today's rally included plans to disrupt CBP work and risk arrest through civil disobedience tactics. This reflects the anger and seriousness of medical professionals who join the fight for immigrant rights and building solidarity among all workers. This rally built on the many resolutions passed in medical organizations to get the message out. This is similar to the way we led the rally at the APHA and turns words into action. While most of the D4CC members are physicians, their events have welcomed a wide range of medical workers as well. In Maryland we are demanding that no new ICE detention centers be built and that local government connections to ICE be stopped. These reforms would be welcome, but they only scratch the surface of capitalism's systematic attack on workers around the world.

Concentration camps litter U.S.-Mexico border

The MPP went into effect on January 29, 2019 and has since detained 58,000 asylum applicants in Mexico until their asylum cases can be heard. Corralled into makeshift camps on the Mexican border, refugees sleep in the open without adequate access to water or proper sanitation. Human Rights First reported 660 reported cases of murder, rape, kidnapping and other attacks against migrants relegated to stay in Mexico by the U.S. under the MPP. These include 148 cases of children who were kidnapped or nearly kidnapped.

The MPP explicitly exempts those with medical and mental health issues; however, the Administration routinely denies humanitarian parole into the U.S. to vulnerable people. The American Civil Liberties Union (ACLU) has reported on 17 instances of Customs and Border Patrol (CBP) officers sending women in the final trimester of pregnancy back to Mexico under the MPP. A woman with a known history of preeclampsia was sent back to Matamoros and went into labor in a tent, endangering both her life and that of her baby. In another case, CBP denied U.S. entry to a seven-year-old girl from Honduras with an enterocutaneous fistula, a condition in which excrement leaks through a hole from the intestines to the skin.

Communist revolution is workers only solution

International agreements and the U.S. bosses own laws claim to be against the mistreatment of refugees, but U.S. bosses ignore these agreements. The bosses break their own laws whenever it suits them—truly a dictatorship of the bourgeoisie. Building our party to move this struggle in a revolutionary direction is critical.✪

Australia editorial

Continued from page 2

coal and gas, and Prime Minister Scott Morrison is the industry's leading cheerleader. According to a German think tank analysis, the country ranks last among 57 nations for climate change policy (guardian.com, 12/10/19). As capitalist climate disasters become more frequent and intense, the bosses are using them to build fascism. "Under legislation pending in Tasmania, and expected to be copied across Australia, environmental protesters now face up to 21 years in jail for demonstrating" (NYT, 1/3). Bosses worldwide are gearing up for an environmental rebellion they see as inevitable. A new wave of fascist anti-protest laws recalls the anti-terrorism laws pushed through the U.S. Congress after 9/11.

Liberal reformism can't save workers from climate disaster

As the bosses look to exploit environmental crises to build fascism, many workers and youth understand that climate change poses a real risk to their future. Large numbers are mobilizing within mass movements like the climate strike in September 2019, the biggest demonstration in Australia's history, followed by the massive "Extinction Rebellion" and anti-mining protests in Melbourne (NYT, 11/6/2019). In some cases, militant students have become the face of the movement, leading the charge to call out capitalist-made unnatural disasters.

But it didn't take long for liberal bosses and revisionists to co-opt the movement, turning the focus from Australia's fossil fuel billionaires to a campaign to oust Morrison (CBS News, 1/10). In the absence of revolutionary communist leadership, what began as an anti-capitalist movement was quickly funneled into the dead end of reformist electoral politics.

Communist revolution will reverse climate disaster

The international working class can't allow ourselves to get duped by fake leftists or sell-out liberals. All of these frauds support capitalism, the system that has put profit ahead of clean air and water for centuries. Removing a few corrupt politicians won't change the course of capitalism's daily assault on workers and the environment. Recognizing our own power is essential to understanding how workers will one day run the world. In Australia, with limited government support and no pay, thousands of volunteer firefighters have led the battles against blazes "the size of small European countries" (bbc.com, 12/24/19). Whenever a climate disaster occurs, workers are the first to step up and act selflessly to rescue others from danger—and to rebuild.

Armed with communist politics and organization, we can transform the bosses' crises into an international movement to destroy capitalism through communist revolution. From Melbourne to San Juan and everywhere in between, rebel against capitalism and join PLP✪

Liberal AMLO continues to exploit workers

MEXICO, March 3—We live under the capitalist system, where a minority of profit thirsty multi-billonaires steal the wealth socially generated by the majority of the exploited and impoverished working class. In Mexico the Fourth Transformation Government (4T), of Andres Manuel Lopez Obrador's (AMLO) campaign, and its promise to end corrpution, and massive income disparity plaguing Mexico, is continuing this viscious cycle rather than eradicating it.

AMLO'S exploitation

The megaprojects of the Interoceanic Corridor (CI, Spanish abbreviation), the Maya Train, the new International Airport in Mexico City, the Comprehensive Project of Morelos (PIM, Spanish abbreviation) and the Dos Bocas Refinery, will bring destruction, death and exploitation for the communities where they are being created. But, according to AMLO's government, it will bring "progress" and "development". Words that under capitalism mean more poverty, exploitation and repression for workers.

Mining destroys

We just have to look at how mining has devastated the lives of millions of workers living in the municipalities where it is taking place. According to a 2017 report from the FUNDAR organization: 50 percent of the mining municipalities in Mexico have higher levels of poverty than the national average and 13 percent of those communities surpass the limits of extreme poverty (Las Actividades Extractivas en México: Minería e Hidrocarburos Hacia el Fin del Sexenio, 2017).

During that same year, according to a report from the Chamber of Mines of Mexico, the mining production was up to 12,772 billion dollars, which means record breaking profits for the mining bosses and inequality and poverty for those communities. Let's not forget that mining destroys workers' way of life and the environment.

Those who oppose these megaprojects are often intimidated or assassinated by the repressive forces and paramilitary groups hired by the companies or organized crime. Samir Flores, an indigenous fighter and leader of the resistance against PIM, was assassinated a few days after AMLO called him a "leftist conservative".

The government of the 4T is also creating conflcit between imperialists. The CI is a project that U.S. imperialism has long wished for; to streamline and simplify the flow of raw material and products between the east and west coast of the U.S., creating more profits. It also means creating big industrial parks with laws that impose slave labor conditions for workers, while taking the abundant hydraulic, mining and energetic resources in the south of Mexico.

But China is rising to become the main imperialist rival of the U.S. The CI will be a confrontation point due to its connection with the strategic Pacific Ocean, the main disputing zone for both imperialists.

Reject all capitalist politicians

We have to confront the attacks these megaprojects represent for our class. The international revolutionary communist Progressive Labor Party (PLP) is in solidarity with these communities and their resistance. We reject all forms of repression against this struggle.

Capitalism will continue its deadly projects, be it with right-wing governments like Peña's or Calderon's or liberal governments like AMLO's. Only in a society run by and for the workers, can projects be done on the basis of the social needs of workers, and without destroying the environment.

In order to make this an effective fight, we have to collectively organize an international revolutionary communist party to unite all the isolated efforts of all communities to the struggles of the world's working class. Only a multiracial, antifascist, international antisexist movement can unite the world's workers in a common fight to liberate the working class from the oppression of the capitalist system. PLP is fighting to build the movement to end capitalism once and for all! Join us!✪

Lessons from the Newark water fight

NEWARK, NJ, MARCH 3—After months of working-class struggle for clean water, the City will provide residents with replacements to lead service lines. The water fight is an important lesson in understanding the difference between reform and revolution. As members of Progressive Labor Party (PLP) continue to organize workers and youth, it is evident that revolutionary organizing is needed more than ever.

The outcomes of this Newark water fight illustrate how the main wing bosses are willing to give workers a limited reform in order to stifle class consciousness. This fight has also reaffirmed the need for communists to be integrated in mass work. PLP continues to try to win workers and students to attend study groups, distribute CHALLENGE to their friends, and put build collectives of fightback for communism.

Small gain for workers = longterm victory for bosses

After months of working-class fightback, the bosses approved a loan to allow Newark to replace all of the lead service lines (the main contributor of lead in the water) at no cost to residents. Normally it could cost residents up to $10,000 to get these replaced.

This news was met with fanfare: many saw the loan as a victory and let the City bosses and politicians look like heroes. Only under capitalism would we celebrate something that should be an absolute and inviolable necessity of living—clean pipes and clean water.

Gain pacifies fight

There is no doubt that workers' fightback made this reform possible.

In the long run though, the bosses have the most to gain. First, this money is coming from a loan from the county government. This means that the City of Newark will have to repay the debt of $120 million. Newark Mayor Ras Baraka claims the City will use its revenue from its contracts with Port Authority to pay the debt service (Wall Street Journal, 10/1/19).

When the bosses give with one hand, they take away with the other. The question is what resources were those funds from Port Authority going towards before this debt service decision? Those funds could have gone to other services that the residents are in dire need of. Once again the billionaires walk away without having to pay while the workers are left holding the bag.

Under capitalism, workers are forced to choose between impossible decisions—clean water or medical services, education or rent. Assuming the bosses will follow through, what will workers have less of in exchange of these new service lines?

Furthermore, the announcement of the lead service line replacement has won many fighters to abandon the struggle for clean water. If one section of the working class succumbs to the sentiment that "we got ours," the entire working class continues to suffer. So, what about Flint? What about the thousands of U.S. areas still afflicted with lead poisoning that's worse than Flint? What about Mexico? The Congo? Pakistan? The working class needs an international communist Progressive Labor Party. to be able to solve the problems capitalism created.

At a period of low class struggle, workers can become cynically content with small gains. In this period, the liberal fascist wing of the bosses can afford to give in to some reforms that workers fought for. The question is why. In giving a limited reform, the bosses are able to clamp down on fightback, pacify workers, and buy allegiance to their imperialist system.

Militancy doesn't equal revolution

The fight is never over. A recent EPA study showed that a fourth of the City filters tested were improperly installed and exposed workers to lead (EPA.GOV, 11/22/19). Many workers demanded that the City hire residents to go door to door to help install these filters. The city claimed that it was too expensive. However, they would rather spend over $1 million hiring lawyers and the same public relations firm that was in Flint, Michigan. While there are still fighters going to city hall meetings, there has been little organizing to fight these ideas.

Some sections of the working class continue to fight for larger ideas such as taxing the rich to pay for these reforms. There are also organizations that connect the water struggle to the ICE attack on migrant workers. All of these issues could be used to illustrate the necessity for workers to unite against the bosses, but these are not substitutes for communist ideas.

Organizing workers to fight for communism means that we must be in the struggle and show how a world run by the working class is possible and viable. We don't have a blueprint but we do have history and our politics to give other workers a glimpse of what communism can be like. If the communists during the Chinese Revolution were able to eliminate foot binding, illiteracy, prostitution, and syphilis, surely the working class can figure out how to provide clean safe water to its members. A glimpse of the potential of working-class unity can be realized at PLP's May Day on May 2.

Communist experience & May Day

PLP gained experience and potential in working in mass organizations to coordinate and get out communist politics. We gained confidence and experience working in the mass movements. It also helped train and consolidate younger members.

PLP continues to distribute and discuss CHALLENGE with friends in this struggle. Friends have our communist holiday May Day to look forward to. Newark comrades have been holding study groups on the *Communist Manifesto*, Vladimir Lenin's *Imperialism*, and a Marxist analysis of culture. We will carry on the fight. We don't know when the struggle will sharpen again; when it does, PLP will be there.✪

The facts on Newark & lead

Eighty five percent of Newark is Black or Latin and the working class has been suffering through this blatant racism.

Lead is a powerful neurotoxin. It can lead to developmental delays, hearing loss, seizures, learning difficulties, and behavioral disorders in children. Adults can develop mental, nerve, kidney, and cardiovascular problems. Pregnant women are at risk of miscarriage, stillbirth, and newborns with irreversible damage to their brain and nervous system. There is no such thing as a "safe" level of lead consumption.

Communist roots ground International Working Women's Day in class struggle

This is the women combat unit of the Red Army, also known by their German nickname, "Night Witches." They were equally hated and feared by the Nazis. These communist women were crucial to the Soviet victory of World War II.

In the liberal mainstream world, International Women's Day is hailed as a day for all women to celebrate women's innate strength, nurturing ability, power to sway legislators, give birth, and challenge sexism by moving into positions of power in the capitalist system.

All these sexist lies conceal the key contributions of militant, communist, working class, women leaders who understood that you can only fight sexism with a multiracial, multi-generational, and most of all, a working-class movement.

In 2019, the average woman still makes 79 cents for every dollar men make (Payscale.com). The number is even lower for Black, Latin, and indigenous women, who make 26 percent less than white men workers.

Furthermore, we reject the ideology that bosses like Hilary Clinton, Elizabeth Warren, Alexandria Ocasio-Cortez and Kamala Harris help women workers. These ruling-class women perpetuate sexist divisions in our class

The Progressive Labor Party (PLP) celebrates the history of working-class women—who often put their life on the line—in the fight towards a communist future without sexism, racism, and exploitation.

This month we revisit a few stories, emphasizing that sexism doesn't just hurt women workers, but the whole working class. The only solution to sexism is nothing short of communist revolution.

Inspired by May Day

Inspired by a May Day demonstration, Clara Zetkin began to lay the groundwork in 1889 to establish International Women's Day as a communist holiday for working class women (JSTOR, 2019). In 1910 at the Second Women's Conference of the Second International, she proposed the following resolution, "In agreement with the class-conscious, political and trade union organizations of the proletariat...the socialist women of all countries will hold each year a Women's Day..." Zetkin went on to become a communist leader in Germany.

Smashing racism at the border

One of those women was a Mexican labor organizer and anti-racist activist, Emma Tenayuca. Born in San Antonio, Texas in 1916, Emma was arrested after joining her first picket line against Finck Cigar Company at age 16 (La Aztlan, 2000). Her political ideology was shaped by two major historical events—The Great Depression during the 1930s and The Mexican Repatriation, a mass deportation of Mexican and Mexican American workers from 1929-1936. As a young person she visited La Plaza del Zacate where socialist and communist working class leaders gave speeches on the plight of the working class and discussions would take place on how to organize.

Emma began organizing workers and by 1934, at age 18, had already helped form the Ladies' Garment Workers Union. She was arrested as a leader of the 1938 Texas Pecan Shellers Strike. She also organized unemployed workers with Mrs. W.H. Ernst, another radical leader of the Finck cigar strike to form the Workers Alliance. She continually protested over the abuse suffered by Mexican migrants at the hands of U.S. Border Patrol agents. In 1937, Emma joined the American Communist Party.

Organizing against big tobacco

In Winston-Salem, North Carolina, thousands of Black women went on strike against exploitation by the Big Tobacco company R.J. Reynolds (RJR) and formed the labor union, Local 22. RJR ruled over schools, hospitals, parks and many of the available jobs. 16,000 of those workers were women and more than 80 percent were Black. However, higher-paying jobs were not available for Black workers and women were paid even less (Winston-Salem Monthly, 2018).

Women worked in sweltering rooms thick with tobacco dust. One woman, a widow and mother of five, was too ill to work, but was told by the foreman "if she didn't catch up, there was the door" (Our State, 9/18). The women met at lunchtime and organized a plan to stop working immediately after lunch. They recruited men in the adjacent casing room to join them.

Velma Hopkins helped mobilize 10,000 workers into the streets of Winston-Salem. Local 22 was integrated and led primarily by Black women. Before Local 22 faced set-backs from red-baiting and the power of RJRs anti-unionism, it gained national attention for its vision of an equal society. Women workers like Velma Hopkins, Theodosia Simpson, Viola Brown, Moranda Smith and Christine Gardner were active Communist Party members.

Soviet women pilots help defeat the Nazis

With working-class women on the forefront, the Red Army battled and smashed the fascist Nazi army. In World War II, women served in the Soviet Air Force. Dubbed the "night witches" by the Germans, they took off at three-minute intervals, sometimes 10 times a night. They flew more than 30,000 combat sorties in conditions unimaginable today, They slept two-three hours near their planes in freezing temperatures. "The control stick was heavy to move, and our arms and legs were so short ..."

Nineteen-year-old Lieutenant Yekaterina Musatova-Fedotova, recalled, "The navigators helped us by pushing on our backs as we pushed on the stick to get the tail up for take off." (NYT, 12/4/1994)

Fifteen women pilots died at Stalingrad, "We hated the German fascists so much that we would have even flown a broom to be able to fire at them."

Continuing the tradition of communist women

In PLP, we have women like Clara, Emma, Velma, and Yekaterina continuing the tradition of fightback and building amongst the working class. In New York, the women in the family of Shantel Davis, a young woman murdered by the police, continue to speak out against police brutality and organize with other working families that have been forever changed by the racism of Killer KKKops. Founders of Moms 4 Housing are battling against exploitative tenant laws, racism and sexism in California. Teachers from Chicago have protested on picket lines against racism underlined in school closings and exploitation of teachers in schools. Women are fighting against environmental racism in Newark and building with communities to see past liberal politicians' false promises. We as a party fight against sexism because it means the super-exploitation of women, and because overall, it divides the working class. No matter the gender, we all must join in on mass fightback and speak out about the communist history of International Working Women and anti-sexism everyday. Join PLP today!✪

LETTERS

We encourage all CHALLENGE readers to send in letters and articles about their experiences fighting the bosses worldwide.

The material foundation of "greed"

People often talk about the "greedy bosses" and say that capitalism and imperialism come from such greed. But that's got it backwards. Greed and selfishness come from the material processes of capitalism. This analysis comes from dialectical materialism, the philosophy of the working class, and is in contrast to philosophical idealism, that argues that ideas and spirit determine material reality.

After a revolution, we will be able to weaken and ultimately eradicate greed and selfishness with the new material foundation of communism. How would this work?

In capitalism, the material basis of greed and selfishness is the competitive drive among different capitalists to beat out their rivals – something they have to do to avoid losing out, going bankrupt, and having to go to work for a living. These despicable values are instilled into the working class through education, life at work, and the culture in general. Despite the bosses' best efforts, workers still tend to be far more selfless, particularly in times of stress, than capitalists.

During the transition from capitalism to communism, once state power is in the hands of the working class and its leading organization, the Progressive Labor Party leadership will stimulate a growing class consciousness of the working class, which will be effective because material life will be based on equality and collective planning rather than dog-eat-dog competition. It will take struggle and time to overcome the remnants of capitalist thinking among our fellow workers and it won't always be pretty. But we will have the material foundation in communist economic relations and a political foundation in the leadership of revolutionary communists to ensure that we will succeed in this goal.

★★★★★

Hitler's anti-Jewish racism

I'm writing this letter in response to the March 4th article "Red Army liberated the Auschwitz death camp."Although I thought it was good, the article on Auschwitz, had an important omission: it failed to point out the central role that racism, in the form of antisemitism, played in Hitler's regime.

This suprised me as CHALLENGE articles consistently highlight the role of racism in dividing the working class and shifting the blame for workers' conditions onto fellow workers' of different ethnic groups and immigrants rather than capitalism.

While Hitler targeted communist, Roma, gay, and disabled workers, Auschwitz and other concentration camps became killing factories to carry out Hitler's final solution to the 'Jewish Problem".

This is an important historical lesson, that should not be forgotten, on the evils that racism can lead to.

★★★★★

Mark and Ann helped me grasp communism

Thanks for the obituary of "Mark Shapiro, A Communist for All Seasons," in the February 19 issue. In 1964, I was 20 years old and passionately opposed to the U.S. war on Vietnam. When the Progressive Labor Movement called a march in NYC on May 2 to demand that the U.S. withdraw from Vietnam, I worked hard to bring people. This 1,000-strong march was the beginning of what became a movement of millions. Progressive Labor Movement proposed forming a committee to continue organizing against the war. Along with four other young guys who had helped build for the march, I joined PL'ers in founding the May 2nd Committee.

Mark and Ann were a couple of years older than us and had us over for dinner often. I showed up one week happy that Senator William Fullbright had come out against the Vietnam war. Mark and Ann patiently explained that Fullbright was a racist, an enemy of the working class, and opposed the war because he thought pursuing it would harm U.S. imperialism. I guess I didn't absorb it, because the same conversation happened when Senator Earnest Gruening came out against the war, and again about Senator Wayne Morse.

The third time the concept sunk in, and I could explain it to others. Mark and Ann didn't dismiss me as a hopeless liberal. They worked hard to help me understand Marxism. And they made great spaghetti and had wonderful senses of humor.

I joined PLM and Progressive Labor Party when it was founded the following year, and am still a member 55 years later. Mark and Ann were real communists, in mind and heart. They live on in the influence they had on me and hundreds of others.

★★★★★

Quarantines May Be Needed

The editorial on the Coronavirus outbreak in China says that quarantine is a repressive tactic by a fascist capitalist government in political and economic crisis. It is true that the outbreak allows the Chinese government to increase use of police and military to enforce a quarantine. But from a public health perspective, quarantine is one method of handling a new outbreak. Limiting exposure to the virus pending a vaccine and/or a better understanding of the risk of the virus is not unreasonable.

Since China has restored capitalism for many decades, the government's slow decision to carry out quarantine was a major contributing factor in the spread of the virus. From the very beginning, the local and the central bureaucrats tried to downplay the potential of human-to-human transmission. After all, no one wanted to disrupt the capitalist market!

We also think that it is wrong to describe China as a "capitalist government in crisis". Yes, the Coronavirus outbreak is a health crisis. But China is a rising imperialist. Its economic growth is still faster than that of the U.S. and western countries even as it has decelerated somewhat recently. The increasing authoritarianism and repression under Xi, the attacks on Marxists who oppose the regime, the abuse of the Uygher population in Xinjiang Province, and the Belt and Road Initiative are not signs of crisis but rather an acceleration of its drive to carve out more empire for itself at the expense of rival imperialists.

Challenge responds:

The quarantine in China is meant to serve the needs of the Chinese bosses. In this case it is mainly about fascist control of the population not the needs of the working class. Public health, like education and everything else controlled by the bosses is used to serve their interests. The working class fights to gain some benefits but the systems are used to maintain the oppression of the working class.

Chinese capitalism is rising in relation to the U.S. but this is a period of general crisis for the capitalists around the world that is a prelude to wider wars and growing fascism. Much as U.S. capitalism was rising in relation to the old powers prior to World War II, they were still facing the general crisis of capitalism during the 1930s.

★★★★★

In Memoriam:Joan Heymont, a communist fighter

Comrade Joan Heymont died on February 26, surrounded by her family and comrades who had become her family, after a valiant battle against interstitial lung disease. A lifelong communist, Joan was an anchor of the New York City Progressive Labor Party collective and a leader of the Party's education work around the world.

Joan grew up in Rockaway, Queens, the child of two former Communist Party members. She learned strong working-class values and a fighting spirit from her parents, who helped organize the Rockaway community against displacement of Black communities by the city and support for workers harmed by unsafe working conditions.

An excellent student, Joan entered Stony Brook University early and joined Progressive Labor Party there, having met the Party through the anti-war work of Students for a Democratic Society in the 1960s. Joan then spent many years as a hospital laboratory worker, organizing for communism in the unions there.

Communist science teacher

Joan later began to work in the NYC public schools, first as a laboratory specialist, and then as a science teacher. Joan was a dedicated teacher who spent enormous amounts of time thinking about what and how to teach her students, connecting with other teachers to learn from them, and sharing her own ideas and lesson plans at science teacher meetings and online groups. She made the connection between science and politics, knowing that the two are interconnected.

Joan was a leader of the Party's work in education, helping to lead the struggle for Party teachers to make sure that their pedagogy was as strong as their political agitation and base building. Joan worked to help other communist teachers see that "fighting to learn" and "learning to fight" were equally important, organizing several conferences of Party teachers focused on the connections between our political organizing and planning for our classrooms. She was a mentor to many teachers at the schools she worked at, as well as in the Party.

Union work

Joan represented the Party's ideas in the teachers union at the local and national levels. She stood on the floor of the UFT Delegates Assembly every month and at NEA and AFT conventions every summer to advocate for working-class politics and struggle. She joined many coalitions and union groups over the years, fighting to move those groups to the left. In every group she participated in, she was respected for her integrity and welcomed as a friend. She was able to build friendly relationships even with those who disagreed with her ideas. Joan didn't give up on workers; she worked to bring her friends closer to the Party, to win them to communist ideas.

Wherever Joan was, she fought for communism. Wherever the Party was fighting, Joan was there. As much as the workers loved her, the bosses wanted to be rid of her. At Boys and Girls High School, the administration attacked her for organizing students and removed her from her classroom and the school for several months. Joan fought like hell to get back to her work teaching and organizing. She never gave up until she was back in that classroom.

Far beyond the struggles on the job, at the union and in the streets, Joan built a collective life. She and her husband Paul raised four daughters together, trying to develop equality in their home.

Continued on page 7

Raise a fist for a dedicated comrade

Continued from page 6

Many more young people over the years have described Joan as "like a mother" to them - former students, younger comrades, the children of friends. Joan helped raise dozens, there for support and struggle. And anyone Joan knew who had a new baby received a beautiful blanket or sweater, hand knit by her while she led meetings, rode the train or just had 10 minutes to sit still.

Party is red politics and red culture

Joan always said that joining the Party had taught her many things beyond politics and she saw it as her legacy to continue that gift. She remembered older comrades introducing her to cuisines and cultures she had never experienced before and she delighted in doing the same for her students and young comrades. She took joy in sharing a new restaurant, a new recipe, a new neighborhood or museum or city. And Joan made the life of the Party delicious. She loved to cook and bake, both as a scientist looking for the best recipe and a communist recognizing the role of building a collective. Many a potluck, cookout and fundraiser were made successful by Joan's efforts. As her politics had a strong social aspect, Joan's social life was political. At her family's enormous annual Thanksgiving Rehearsal open house, or any other event she hosted, CHALLENGE was offered and communist politics were discussed.

Joan's comrades, friends and family members all describe her in the same way. She was a steady, tireless and optimistic fighter for the working class. She cared for and educated those around her without letting her ego get in the way of what needed to be done. Joan built networks and collectives in every aspect of her life, and that must now carry her work forward: building collective knowledge and struggle, learning about the world in all its aspects, and fighting the bosses everywhere we can.✪

RED EYE ON THE NEWS . . .

Below are excerpts from the capitalist press that might be of use for our readers

NYT=New York Times

GW= Guardian Weekly

Immigrant workers block ICE jail

NYT, 2/21 — An undocumented immigrant, Maribel Ramirez, in California's Central Valley… has called home for 20 years.

…On [Feb. 18]…she stood with hundreds of other residents outside McFarland's City Council chambers, a bullhorn in her hand. "No ICE! No GEO! We're farmworkers, not delinquents," they chanted in Spanish, led by Ms. Ramirez, 42.

At issue was a multibillion-dollar corporation's [GEO] proposal to convert two state prisons slated for closure into detention centers for undocumented immigrants…[on] contract with Immigration and Customs Enforcement….

McFarland…is home to thousands of workers like Ms. Ramirez who toil in the vineyards and the almond, pistachio and citrus orchards that stretch out in every direction. Up to half of the city's 15,000 residents…are undocumented, the very…people who might be housed behind bars in the facilities that until have now been sheltering criminals….

…The city's planning commission, bowing to overwhelming public sentiment, voted against the proposal….

The company could appeal…but residents made it clear that they would do whatever they can to block the plan….

…[We] "will suffer," said Estevan Davalos, an undocumented farmworker from Mexico who has lived and worked in McFarland for years….

Ms. Ramirez, who helped organize the opposition…was just 22 when she crossed the border from Mexico, found work picking grapes in McFarland and started a family….

…Said Ms. Ramirez, "An ICE detention center…would bring fear to our community….

…In October…GEO and ICE signed an agreement…to turn the state prisons…into federal detention facilities for immigrants….

That's when the community got to work….

…Each afternoon after finishing her shift, Ms. Ramirez joined dozens of other people knocking on doors to…seek support for their campaign….

All told the group collected 1,000 cards….

By the time she arrived outside the [Commission's] chambers…she was…leading the crowd of 300 in protest chants….

Racist cops run wild, frame hundreds with false confessions

NYT, 2/27 — It started with a drug raid in Houston and a shootout that left two people dead, five police wounded and one of them charged with murder, accused of making up information to obtain a warrant.

Now 69 people whose prosecution relied on evidence from that accused officer are likely to have their convictions reversed….The news had echoes of other high-profile police scandals, including the 1990s Rampart case in Los Angeles and the wrongful prosecution of dozens of African-Americans in Tulia, Texas, two decades ago.

Almost all of the 69 defendants have already served their sentences, which ranged…]up] to four years in prison. That had all pleaded guilty as result of deals in which prosecutors relied on evidence that Gerald Goines had handled, the narcotics officer who was charged…with two counts of felony murder for his role in the botched raid..

…There have been more than 2,500 exonerations in the United States since 1989. More than half of those cases involved allegations of official misconduct….

Experts say some defendants…plead guilty to crimes they did not commit after being locked up in jail for days or months awaiting a resolution….

In the Tulia case, nearly 50 people, almost all of them African-Americans, were exonerated and pardoned after they were convicted of fabricated drug charges based on the work of an undercover agent accused of racism and perjury. And more than 100 convictions were overturned in the… Rampart Division scandal in Los Angeles, which involved physical abuse, evidence planting and false arrests.

CIA torturers outdo Hitler's Nazis

NYT, 2/27 — Guantanamo Bay, Cuba — It was May 2003, a year into the CIA program that had led to three detainees being waterboarded hundreds of times…and the agency needed to train more interrogators. At a classified prison in Afghanistan known as the Salt Pit, trainees took turns practicing "insult slaps and attention grabs" on a naked prisoner named Ammar al-Baluchi….

… At the Salt Pit about five trainees took turns slapping Mr. al-Baluchi, spinning him around and slamming his head into a wooden or cement wall, so a supervisor could observe and "then certify class members as interrogators….

…Details of what went on at the secret overseas prison network….showed that the interrogation program was more a test for unproven techniques….with rules made up or broken on the fly….

Across four years, the CIA moved about 100 prisoners through 10 sites from Afghanistan to Thailand, Poland, Morocco and Guantanamo and always out of reach of the…Red Cross….

…The intelligence agency experimented with violence, nudity, isolation, sleep deprivation and psychological manipulation….

…The roles of Drs. Mitchell and Jessen expanded from psychologists…to interrogators to ultimately running an $81 million business that provided private guards….

At the black sites, they tested… ."rectal rehydration" and "rectal feeding" on defiant detainees. To deprive detainees of sleep, they strung them up with chains….

At the Salt Pit in Afghanistan…the CIA's chief of interrogators…ordered guards to put a broomstick behind the knees of a Saudi prisoner and bend him backward, so his shoulder blades touched the floor….

Defense lawyers…say that some of the men now have memory problems associated with traumatic brain injuries and sleep disorders from what was done to them at the black sites.

Mr. bin al-Shibh's defense lawyer…asked Dr. Mitchell whether there had ever been studies done on the long-term effects of the techniques…. "Not to my knowledge," Dr. Mitchell replied. "That would be human experimentation, and I believe that's against the law."

Claudia Jones, revolutionary Black communist

It was out of my Jim Crow experiences as a young Negro woman, experiences likewise born of working-class poverty that led me to join the Young Communist League and to choose the philosophy of my life, the science of Marxism-Leninism—that philosophy that not only rejects racist ideas, but is the antithesis of them. - Claudia Jones

One of the biggest lies the capitalists have ever tried to teach generations of working class people is that Black workers did not play a critical role in communist history. This is because the bosses will ALWAYS try to perpetuate the idea that workers should remain divided by race. However, we know in Progressive Labor Party (PLP) that multiracial unity has ALWAYS been the most effective way for workers to overcome the effects of racial exploitation and oppression. Claudia Jones, a Black female leading member of the Communist Party for decades, represents the heroic efforts in fighting racism and sexism from the 1930s to 1960s, just as her politics also point toward the weaknesses embedded in the strategy of international communism many years ago. The main weakness in the old communist movement that is evident through looking at Claudia Jones is that they did not understand the need for one international party LED by women and Black and Latin workers to unite and fight directly to overthrow capitalism and establish a workers' state.

Formation as a communist

Like thousands of other workers in the early 1900s, Jones and her family emigrated to New York City from Trinidad in the Caribbean. Jones was an avid student and started writing early on. She had dreams of college, but as a daughter of a garment worker who died too young, she started working herself at a young age. The revolutionary vision and struggle of the communist movement appealed to her, and in 1936 she joined the Young Communist League and became active in the movement to defend the Scottsboro 9, a group of Black teenagers, who were falsely accused of raping two white women in Alabama.

A multi-racial, communist-led movement, turned the "Scottsboro Boys" into an international cause of millions of workers all over the world to win their freedom. But just as the communist movement was at its sharpest point of winning workers around the world to workers' revolution, they began to retreat politically into a "popular front against fascism" and Claudia Jones became part of that larger retreat.

Leadership in the Communist Party USA & fascist McCarthyism

In 1937, Jones joined the editorial staff of the communist Daily Worker, rising by 1938 to become editor of the Weekly Review. After WWII, Jones became executive secretary of the Women's National Commission, secretary for the Women's Commission of the Communist Party USA (CPUSA). In 1953, she took over the editorship of Negro Affairs, a CPUSA journal. However, if antiracism and internationalism had been the central premise of the CP's strategy, they would not have had the need for a separate journal to address "Negro Affairs," because all affairs of the working class are touched by racist capitalism and superexploitation.

Despite the shortcomings of the party's line, Jones organized women workers and gave leadership within the Communist Party USA on the ways superexploitation of women could become central to the party's theoretical development. She is perhaps best known for her seminal essay appearing in Political Affairs, "An End to the Neglect of the Problems of the Negro Woman!" in which she took to task liberals, progressives and her own party for not sufficiently recognizing the superexploitation of Black women under capitalism and their leadership in working class struggles, writing:

> *The bourgeoisie is fearful of the militancy of the Negro woman, and for good reason. The capitalists know, far better than many progressives seem to know, that once Negro women begin to take action, the militancy of the whole Negro people, and thus of the anti-imperialist coalition, is greatly enhanced….Viewed in this light, it is not accidental that the American bourgeoisie has intensified its oppression, not only of the Negro people in general, but of Negro women in particular. Nothing so exposes the drive to fascization in the nation as the callous attitude which the bourgeoisie displays and cultivates toward Negro women.*

In 1948, Jones, along with several other leaders of the Communist Party USA, was charged for conspiracy to overthrow the U.S. government. Over the next seven years, the federal government convicted, imprisoned in Ellis Island and ultimately deported Jones—but not without an international movement launched to free her and thousands of other communist and progressive working class organizers imprisoned during the fascism of the McCarthy period.

Fighting British racism & imperialism

Following WWII, Caribbean immigration to the United Kingdom increased and Black and Asian immigrant workers faced brutal racism upon arrival. Signs reading "No Irish, No Coloured, No Dogs" littered the streets of London businesses and apartment buildings for rent. Attacks on Black youth by white mobs and police officers were common. Working in London in the 1950's and 60's, Jones, a lifelong communist and self-described Marxist-Leninist, tirelessly organized several antiracist, anti-imperialist campaigns.

Realizing the importance of celebrating working class culture, Jones founded the West Indian Gazette, a popular newspaper that built a base among Caribbean diaspora workers in Britain and back home, with a circulation of 15,000. In 1958, following the killings of Black youths and riots instigated by racist white mobs in the Notting Hill neighborhood of London, Jones and others organized a carnival in response to the violence as a means of unifying the Black Caribbean community.

Claudia Jones died in December 1964, her health gutted by the years of political persecution and incarceration in the U.S. Her legacy was immediately felt by working class communities around the world and condolences poured in, from W.E.B. DuBois, Paul Robeson and Amy Ashwood Garvey to Mao Zedong, whom Jones had met on a delegation to China. Claudia Jones remains an example of how the leadership of Black workers, especially Black women, is key to the future of building a communist society. Paul Robeson expressed his admiration for Jones thusly:

"It was a great privilege to have known Claudia Jones. She was a vigorous and courageous leader of the Communist Party of the United States, and was very active in the work for the unity of white and coloured peoples and for dignity and equality, especially for the Negro people and for women." It is fitting that Jones is buried next to Karl Marx in Highgate Cemetery in London. Following her deportation, Jones wrote:

> *I was deported from the USA because as a Negro woman communist of West Indian descent, I was a thorn in their side in my opposition to Jim Crow racist discrimination against 16 million Negro Americans in the United States, in my work for redress of these grievances, for unity of Negro and white workers, for women's rights...*

As communists we should all be that thorn in the side of capitalism—so sharp as to make it bleed.✪

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